
An Analytic Storyteller in the Course of Time

Author(s): Andreas Huyssen

Source: *October*, Vol. 46, Alexander Kluge: Theoretical Writings, Stories, and an Interview (Autumn, 1988), pp. 116-128

Published by: [The MIT Press](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/778682>

Accessed: 21/03/2011 10:01

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/action/showPublisher?publisherCode=mitpress>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



The MIT Press is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *October*.

An Analytic Storyteller in the Course of Time

ANDREAS HUYSSSEN

All real beauty is analytic.

— Edgar Allan Poe

*We do not have too much reason and too
little soul; we rather have too little reason in
matters of the soul.*

— Robert Musil

In a *Spiegel* review of Kluge's 1977 *Neue Geschichten* (*New Stories*), his most voluminous and ambitious collection of stories to date, Hans Magnus Enzensberger said something that ten years later still has the ring of truth: "Among well-known German authors Kluge is the least well-known."¹ Least well-known in this case means well-known, but not widely read. It seems that Kluge's unique versatility as filmmaker and film politician, social theorist and storyteller has hampered rather than enhanced the reception of his literary works. Many people will have seen one or the other of Kluge's many films, and there is a lively and growing debate about formal and political aspects of his filmmaking. For the past fifteen years, his theoretical works, coauthored with Oskar Negt, have played an important role in the German discourse of social and cultural theory. But comparatively little serious work has been done on his storytelling.² Many of the early reviews of his stories betrayed, more than anything else, the perplexity and helplessness of the critical establishment, and there seems to be a shared assump-

1. Hans Magnus Enzensberger, "Ein herzloser Schriftsteller," *Der Spiegel*, no. 1 (January 2, 1978), pp. 81–83.

2. Serious critical studies of Kluge's literary texts have only begun to appear since the early 1980s. I only mention the monographs by Rainer Lewandowski, Gerhard Bechtold, and Stefanie Carp, as well as the essay collections published by Suhrkamp Materialien and *Text + Kritik*. (See bibliography.)

“The closer you look at a word
the more distantly it looks back at you.”

GERMANY

»Je näher man ein Wort ansieht,
desto ferner sieht es zurück.«

DEUTSCHLAND

tion that Kluge's "primary" medium is cinema. Surely, the resistance to Kluge's literary texts has something to do with the ways in which these texts consistently and programmatically disappoint readers' expectations. But it also reflects the simple fact that even people interested in contemporary cultural production are more likely to submit themselves to the demands of a ninety-minute Kluge film than to spend several days working through hundreds of pages of seemingly unconnected, discontinuous stories which systematically prevent reader identification and frustrate the pleasures of literariness. Despite the studied simplicity of style, the demands Kluge's stories make on the reader are no less intense than those his films make on their spectator. It is not only that Kluge's filmic or literary texts resemble construction sites, as has often been said. The very structure of his writing is designed to transform the reader's head into a construction site. Occasional resistance to such a demand is understandable and cannot be blamed only on the insidious impact of consumer culture and its ready-made commodities.

The basic paradox and difficulty of these texts by Kluge is that they rely on knowledges, abilities, and desires which, according to his own theoretical analyses of contemporary mass media culture, are on the wane because of the pervasive growth during the period of late capitalism of what he and Negt describe in *Öffentlichkeit und Erfahrung* (*The Public Sphere and Experience*) as the public spheres of production. But even if the reader's ability to produce new social experience is not blocked, even if the reader brings along enough basic knowledge of political economy, social theory, and psychoanalysis to decipher Kluge's stenographic, dialectical constructions of aesthetic image and theoretical concept, the first reaction to the labyrinths of Kluge's story collections, particularly those published during the 1970s, is likely to be frustration and irritation. All traditional notions of narration—such as plot, character, action—are suspended, and one has great difficulty orienting oneself. The stories move in a very fast, shorthand style, and the figures are often just as much in a hurry, heading into either dead ends or disaster. Since authorial commentary is absent and endings often remain inconclusive, the reader never knows whether or with what to identify, which is, of course, exactly what Kluge intends. Many stories focus on events and situations in the lives of individuals, but instead of traditional heroes or modernist anti-heroes, Kluge offers what looks at first sight like narrative chaos, a series of unrelated accounts of events as one might find them on the local news page of the daily paper.

Finally, the fact that Kluge is both acknowledged as a major contemporary writer and ignored results from the density and consistency of his literary project, which was never out of touch with German social and cultural reality, yet never in tune with major literary developments in postwar Germany. His stubborn consistency and independence from the mood swings of the literary scene cost him readers even as it established his reputation as a writer. Still, it is understandable that Kluge was primarily thought of as a filmmaker, rather than a writer. While many of his films were prizewinners from early on, his literary

reputation was officially acknowledged only relatively late, with the Fontane prize in 1979 and, more importantly, the Kleist prize in 1985.

Reading Kluge's stories produces strange effects. Given their sheer number and the shortness of many of them, it is inevitable that the reader will forget many very fast. But eventually one feels the cumulative impact of his kind of storytelling, which operates on a paradigmatic rather than a syntagmatic level. And then there emerge those stories that begin to work in one's head. The gaps and fissures left by Kluge's minimalist narrative strategy beg to be filled in. The reader is hooked.

Even if not all of the stories are successful as stories, they nevertheless provide an immense reservoir of aesthetic, political, and theoretical insight that has yet to be fully tapped. In film circles, especially in Germany, Kluge is and has always been a mythical figure. Perhaps now that the celebrated New German Cinema appears to be moribund (if not already dead), and German literature has lapsed into the privatism of such prophetic or apocalyptic ruminations as characterize the later works of Handke and Bernhard, the time has come to reassess the work of Kluge as a whole and to make it effective for contemporary cultural discourse. The unique mix of film, literature, and theory, image, trope, and concept certainly makes Kluge's overall project one of the most interesting around: Kluge as owl of Minerva for a post-Hegelian, post-avant-gardist dusk in which the classical divisions between philosophy and art, theory and aesthetic practice, film and literature have been, at least tentatively, abandoned, but in which the media-specific differences between film, literature, and theory are not elided to produce that proverbial night in which all cows are gray.

One way of approaching Kluge's literary oeuvre is to position it in relation to some of the major literary trends in postwar Germany, especially the documentarism of the 1960s and the literature of the so-called new subjectivity of the 1970s. West German literature was still under the sway of absurdism and still relished timeless parables of totalitarianism (Dürrenmatt, Frisch, Walser, et al.) when Kluge made his literary debut in 1962 with a collection of stories which, because of their concrete imagination and the merciless precision of their apparently documentary detail, puzzled most of their readers. These *Lebensläufe* (*Curricula Vitae*), life stories of mainly middle- and upper-class Germans during and after the Third Reich (victimizers, fellow-travelers, victims), read like a series of short-circuited and condensed anti-*Bildungsromane*. If the *Bildungsroman*—whose invariable focus was the spiritual or educational trajectory of its hero's life—functioned in German literature as a textual machine in which and through which bourgeois subjectivity constituted itself in history, then Kluge's stories matter-of-factly demonstrate how that subjectivity has been stunted and mutilated under the impact of modernization in general, and fascism in particular. From the very beginning of his literary experiments, Kluge rethinks the parameters and functions of subjectivity rather than abandoning it altogether. He writes stories in which the subjective dimension has been overlaid by anonymous structures, structures of discourse as much as of social behavior.

Already in this first volume of stories, the impact of Frankfurt School theory on Kluge makes its aesthetic and political mark. Kluge takes Adorno's observations about the waning of subjectivity since the liberal age and translates them into new literary form. But he does it differently from classical modernists such as Thomas Mann, Kafka, Rilke, or Benn, who expressed the loss of subjectivity, alienation, and reification in a highly individualized and therefore always recognizable, "personal" style. There is no trace of lament or mourning, no decrying of self-alienation in Kluge, as there is in so many modernist narratives. Nor does Kluge bear comparison with Samuel Beckett, who, in Adorno's aesthetic thought, had become a gauge for measuring the objective decay of subjectivity in a post-Auschwitz age. Kluge does not have a style *qua* individual, authorial language. Rather, he mimics the frozen languages of factual reportage and bureaucracy, of the protocol, the document, the official letter, the legal deposition, the chronicle, and so forth, and modifies them for his purposes, often through methods of logical extrapolation, ironic distance, satire, or humor. His purpose is always to engage the reader in the project of a new kind of enlightenment, one that has worked through the catastrophic failures of its own tradition and that is concerned not only with the fate of human rationality, but also with the historical determinations of the senses, perceptions, and emotions. Kluge's whole project, whether in film, theory, or literature, questions the classical oppositions between the rational and the irrational, the analytic and the emotional, the real and the unreal, and it attempts to unravel their dialectical reversals and mutual, often opaque, implications.

From a literary point of view, a number of questions pose themselves to Kluge, who is not only steeped in Adorno's modernist aesthetic, but also attempts to draw conclusions from Benjamin's reflections on storytelling, memory, and experience. What can the storyteller do once reality evades representation and most representations of reality are no more than simulacra? How do the modern media affect memory? How does the author construct the text/reader relationship in an age of atrophied experience? How does one narrate when reality has become functional, as Brecht already pointed out when he suggested that a simple representation of reality, say a photograph of the Krupp works, no longer grasps that reality? Indeed, Kluge's method of storytelling is very Brechtian. With Brecht he shares the technique of the estranging glance, the method of historicization, and the notion of the social *gest* as it manifests itself in language, attitudes, and behavior. One of Kluge's basic narrative strategies, in an age in which traditional narration is no longer adequate to capture the increasingly complex and abstract structures of contemporary reality, is to render the various language games that constitute social and political reality recognizable as such, to unfold their implications for domination and repression, and to explore their potential for protest and resistance. His is a mode of writing in which these languages seem to swallow up the subjectivity of the individuals whose lives are being narrated by an author who is present not as voice, but in bricolage, in a

method of constructing layers of discourse, of slipping in and out of the discursive mind sets of the figures described.

It is as if modernization speaks itself as a machinery of discourses in whose grids individual subjectivities are simultaneously constituted and imprisoned, even stunted and mutilated. All of the discourses Kluge cites have their own history, their traditions, their genealogy, and many of them are related to the history of German bureaucracy and the Prussian State: the police, the judiciary, the educational system. In Foucault's terms, it is the German archive, its structures and its histories, which Kluge draws on and activates in his storytelling. But if in Foucault subjects are entirely produced by the archive, a process which actually tends to erase subjectivity altogether, Kluge's stories spin themselves out of the residues of subjectivity, distorted subjectivity, stunted subjectivity, subjectivities which can never be separated from the objective determinations of the archive, but which are nevertheless not identical to them. Taken together, Kluge said,³ his *Lebensläufe* pose the question of tradition and make up a sad story (*eine traurige Geschichte*). *Story* here should be taken in the double sense of tale and history, the history of a people whose language and culture is German, and who share a tradition which, according to Kluge, has always excelled in producing catastrophes: from the mythic tragedy of the Nibelungen via the peasant wars of the early sixteenth century to the winter battle of Stalingrad, arguably the decisive turning point of World War II and certainly one of its most stubborn myths. Where Foucault, as historian and scientist, isolates the structures of the various discourses that make up the archive, Kluge, as storyteller in a structuralist age, translates the archive back into individual life stories or, rather, shows how the archive permeates individual modes of speech, behavior, and action. Thus *Lebensläufe* provide a paradigm for his storytelling which will later be expanded and elaborated, but never fundamentally changed or abandoned.

One of the stories from *Lebensläufe*, the story of Anita G., served as the basis for Kluge's first full-length feature film, *Yesterday Girl*. When this film premiered in 1966, West Germany was in the throes of a fascination with the documentary, which *Lebensläufe* and Kluge's subsequent painstaking documentary reconstruction of the battle of Stalingrad—entitled *Schlachtbeschreibung* (*The Battle*, first version 1964)—had anticipated some years earlier. But the reception of Kluge's work did not benefit from this literary new wave, represented primarily by the theater (Hochhuth, Kipphardt, Peter Weiss) and by various attempts to rekindle the Weimar tradition of a working-class literature. More importantly, perhaps, Kluge was already beyond certain aesthetic and political propositions on which much of the documentary wave was based. For instance, he did not make a categorical distinction between fiction and document, as so many of the documentarists did. He did not believe in the myth of the real, the myth of authentic-

3. Alexander Kluge, *Lebensläufe*, Frankfurt, Fischer, 1964, p. 5.

ity, which the document suggested to many at that time. He was skeptical of the claim that the document was closer to reality than to fiction, that only real documents could serve as the basis for a new realism, for a reinvigorated effectiveness of literature in the public sphere. Already in his first text he had liberally mixed documentation and invention, stating laconically in the foreword that his *Lebensläufe* were partly invented, partly not. The notion of an invented document is no contradiction in terms for an author who is interested in the structure and paradigms of documentary discourses rather than in their claims to empirical truth or factual accuracy. Thus many of Kluge's stories read like documentary texts, even if they are totally fictional: see, for example, his viciously satirical science fiction tales in *Lernprozesse mit tödlichem Ausgang* (*Learning Processes with Deadly Consequences*, 1973), in which capitalism races through space in a state of permanent civil war, leaping from one galactic system to the next, always in search of raw materials, labor power, and the maximization of profit.

In retrospect, I would claim that with very few exceptions — Peter Weiss's *Investigation* among them — Kluge's best documentary writing has more to offer aesthetically and politically than most of the documentarism of the 1960s. The reason for this is quite simple. Much of 1960s documentarism treated literature and the stage as moral institutions designed to provide enlightenment. The Schillerian dramaturgy of Rolf Hochhuth's plays (e.g., *The Deputy*) may serve as the most obvious example of this trend, which, at least implicitly, took the structures of a traditional bourgeois public sphere for granted. Kluge's writing in turn operated on a level of aesthetic reflection and analytic savvy that had learned its lessons from the experiments of the Weimar avant-garde, especially Brecht and the montage tradition. His project was also deeply influenced by the thought of both Benjamin and Adorno.⁴ It took several more books and a number of films to reveal that, among contemporary German writers and artists, Kluge is perhaps the most important and creative heir to those still vibrant traditions. If one examines Kluge's literary and theoretical positions, one sees how the well-known dichotomies — Brecht vs. Adorno, Adorno vs. Benjamin, or political writing vs. high modernism, mass culture as tool of domination vs. media as agents of emancipation — are taken apart in his writing practice and give way to methods of remixing, constructing, and collaging that set those well-known positions productively back into motion. Of course, what I am here claiming for Kluge's storytelling is equally true for his filmmaking and his theoretical analyses of the public sphere, experience, and the history of labor power, the project of his and Oskar Negt's last gigantic cooperative venture, *Geschichte und Eigensinn* (*History and Obstinacy*).

4. On the relationship between Kluge and Adorno, see especially Miriam Hansen, "Introduction to Adorno: 'Transparencies on Film,'" *New German Critique*, 24/25 (Fall/Winter 1981–82), pp. 186–198. Also see the already mentioned book by Stefanie Carp.

To return to the German literary context of Kluge's writing: it is no surprise that the 1968 radical student attack on all forms of art and literature as "bourgeois culture" put Kluge and other *Autorenfilmer* on the defensive. He was not willing simply to dump his project of developing and nurturing a New German Cinema both as filmmaker and film politician, nor was he willing to embrace the abstract choice between literature and politics, to abandon literature for politics as the radical rhetoric of the times demanded. His response to the student movement's challenge to art, literature, and film was articulated in the film *Artists under the Big Top: Perplexed*, a complex reflection on the crisis of art as institution in a historical pressure cooker. For a while, then, Kluge withdrew into his work at the Institut für Filmgestaltung in Ulm, where he began to develop a project of science fiction films, a kind of "flight from reality," as he himself described it later on. But it was also in those years that he deepened his understanding of social theory and political economy in the first cooperative work with Negt, published in 1972 as *Öffentlichkeit und Erfahrung*. One year later he published his second major collection of stories, *Lernprozesse mit tödlichem Ausgang* (1973), which reflects his modified theoretical outlook. If the Stalingrad book was primarily concerned with the question of the organization of a disaster, *Lernprozesse* picks up on the model of *Lebensläufe*, except that it now presents life histories in their relation to the sphere of capitalist production. The principles of industrial production, as analyzed by Marxism, are shown to determine not just the sphere of production in the narrow sense, but also the social production of emotional experience, social cooperation, love and death, crime and justice, morality and personal relations. Kluge writes stories about learning processes that result in death, with the obvious hope that a different type of learning can be realized by the reader. He tells of events and situations whose meaning is somehow not accessible to the participants. The learning processes described take place in various areas of social life: industrial labor, leisure time, organized crime, personal relations, and, finally, the extrapolated development of imperialism after the nuclear holocaust—a science fiction story as only Kluge could have written it. All of these learning processes end badly because they invariably consist of fragmentary or partial actions which cannot be meaningfully connected; they are based on false exclusions, abstract divisions, forced separations; their protagonists are intensely in search of an overarching meaning of life, which is always missed and perhaps forever elusive. What Kluge calls "hunger for meaning" (*Hunger nach Sinn*) is the unifying element in all of these stories, but the social situation in the twentieth century and beyond is characterized by *Sinnentzug*, a withdrawal of meaning.⁵ In the foreword, Kluge writes: "With-

5. In German, the word *Sinn* is ambivalent. It can be translated as "meaning," but it also refers to "sense," as in "senses," "sensual," "sensuality." When Kluge talks of *Sinnentzug*, then, he also refers to an atrophy of the human senses brought about by the processes of modernization.

drawal of meaning. A social situation in which the collective life program of human beings falls apart faster than new life programs can be produced.”⁶

When Kluge published these stories in 1973, German literature had just recovered from the 1968 assault on its legitimacy and begun its ambivalent journey into what came to be called “the new subjectivity” or “new inwardness” (*neue Innerlichkeit*). Again Kluge was and was not part of this literary direction. Since he had never bought into the latent objectivism of the documentary and political waves, he did not need to rediscover the problem of subjectivity, which from early on had been central to his literary and aesthetic investigations. The promises of immediacy and authenticity — whether in the form of the document or the personal, the emotional, the subjective — had no appeal for him. From Kluge’s perspective, the enthusiasm with which the new subjectivity was embraced had to be read as yet another expression of the indomitable desire for meaning. And the learning processes initiated by this literary reaction against the objectivism of the previous years were all too often based on the same sorts of exclusions and oppositions his own writing was designed to question. Ironically, while some critics had taken *Lebensläufe* to task for not being documentary enough, for focusing on individual lives and bourgeois individuals, in the 1970s Kluge was criticized for not being subjective enough, for hiding in his texts, for not coping adequately with the problem of subjectivity, either his own or that of his figures.

I suspect that either these specific critiques or the general cultural climate that nurtured subjective expression and reflections on subjectivity led Kluge to insert his own authorial self more forcefully into his later texts. Certainly there are signs of this in Kluge’s trilogy from the late 1970s. Kluge’s own obsessions — the obsession with Stalingrad and military strategy, the obsession with his own experience of aerial bombardment, the obsession with the functional and the technocratic, and the obsession with the dead of history — come more to the fore than ever in his most recent collection of stories, the *Neue Geschichten, Hefte 1-18: “Unheimlichkeit der Zeit”* (1977), as well as in one of his most important and most widely discussed films of those years, *Die Patriotin (The Female Patriot)*. The theoretical centerpiece of the trilogy is *Geschichte und Eigensinn*, written with Negt over the space of three years and published in 1981.

It would be futile to try to describe, in toto, the *Neue Geschichten*. They are too diverse, too heterogeneous to be captured in a coherent description. There are 149 stories, some shorter, some longer, sometimes narrated in organized sequences, sometimes not. Some of the eighteen notebooks have titles (“Images

6. Alexander Kluge, *Lernprozesse mit tödlichem Ausgang*, Frankfurt, Suhrkamp, 1973, p. 5.

from *My Home Town*,” “Inside the Brain of the Metropolis”), most do not. Illustrations are liberally interspersed: photos, including family snapshots, graphics, drawings, sketches, maps, musical scores, paintings, and so forth, but their relation to the text often remains opaque.⁷ The stories focus on administered human life during the Third Reich and the war, in the Federal Republic, in the German Democratic Republic. They are always precise and obsessed with quantifiable detail, but they also remain fragmentary and strangely decentered. In opposition to the homogenizing stories fabricated in the public media, Kluge focuses on the particular without immediately making it representative of something other than itself. But he does this in such a way that the particular, the nonidentical is not paralyzed in isolation, not cut off from the larger context in which it is embedded. On the contrary, the glance of radical particularization opens up questions of mediation, coherence, *Sinn*. The multiplicity of stories, voices, events prevents any individual event or life story from becoming representative. It is precisely the precision with which each particular is presented that points to the nonrepresentability of the social whole.

And yet the *Neue Geschichten* offer something of an encyclopedia— incomplete to be sure—of contemporary German life from the Third Reich to the present. Critics have isolated thematic clusters: cuts from various work places, the state apparatuses, the private sphere; individual life stories or fragments thereof; the military-industrial complex and the academy; 1968, the student movement, the work of the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt, and so on. Time and again Kluge focuses on the energy and *Eigensinn* with which individuals pursue their goals. Many stories revolve around the destiny of the senses, memory, childhood, revenge, happiness. Kluge is especially successful in capturing the functionalist mind set of the compulsively neurotic technocrat, and the stories present a variety of them: bomber pilots and administrators, technical planners and academic researchers.

The ostensible lack of unity intends, of course, to approximate the lack of coherence both in reality and in the experience of it. Even to say, as some critics have, that the subtitle *Unheimlichkeit der Zeit* provides a unifying element is not exactly to say much, since the subtitle is itself quite ambiguous. It can be translated with equal justification as “the uncanniness of time” or as “uncanny times,” and the latter may refer to the present or to the past. Both translations, of course, apply. Kluge himself calls *Neue Geschichten* stories without an overarching concept and claims not always to understand their overall connections. But in this volume as in earlier ones, the basic aesthetic *gestus* of Kluge’s mode of writing is

7. On Kluge’s technique of mixing text and illustrations, see Gerhard Bechtold, *Sinnliche Wahrnehmung von sozialer Wirklichkeit: Die multi-medialen Montage-Texte Alexander Kluges*, Tübingen, Gunter Narr, 1983. See also Bechtold’s essay in Thomas Böhm-Christl, ed., *Alexander Kluge: Materialien*, Frankfurt, Suhrkamp, 1983, pp. 212–232.

still “antifictional,” as some critics have called it.⁸ Mise-en-scène and the counterfeiting of documentary materials results in an antifictionalization of narration which, as Stefanie Carp says in her superb study, is directed “against the cultural fictions that mythicize or deny the abstraction of human life”⁹ in contemporary culture. Kluge himself says much the same when he describes his project as writing realistic counter-(hi)stories against the reality-fiction of history (*gegen den Real-Roman der Geschichte*¹⁰); these stories are aesthetically and structurally adequate to contemporary reality’s high degree of complexity and at the same time make available, in the form of art, those possibilities of experience and consciousness which are blocked by the reality-fiction of history. I cannot develop here Kluge’s complex aesthetic of realism, which permeates all of his texts, stories, films, theory, and essays.¹¹ Clearly, his stubbornness in holding onto one of the most prostituted terms in the vocabulary of modern aesthetics has to do with his affinity with Brecht as well as with his desire to deconstruct what Adorno called the “universal context of delusion” produced by late capitalism. “The motive for realism,” he writes in his essay on reality’s ideological claims to be realistic, “is not affirmation of reality, but protest.”¹² The protest of Kluge’s realism is not so much directed against the literary realism of the nineteenth century — one of the main targets of modernist fiction and theory; rather, it is directed against the homogenized realism (*Einheitsrealismus*) propagated by the mass media. In this sense Kluge’s project is not narrowly aesthetic, but informed by a desire to open up spaces for the production of what he and Negt called counter-public spheres.

And yet, the realism, or, depending on the position from which one speaks, antirealism of Kluge’s stories is emphatically an *aesthetics* of resistance, constructed to resist homogenization, centralization, administration from above. But rather than privileging heterogeneity as romanticized other, it shows in concrete terms how heterogeneity and difference are themselves internally split: on the one hand, the heterogeneity of resistance, which Kluge captures with the notion of *Eigensinn* and self-regulation, on the other hand, the heterogeneity and difference produced by the homogenizing system itself, the heterogeneity which results from the processes of specialization, division, separation that make up the modern world.

The difference between *Neue Geschichten*, on the one hand, and *Die Patriotin*

8. Dietmar Kamper, “Phantastische Produktivität,” in Böhm-Christl, p. 287.

9. Stefanie Carp, *Kriegsgeschichten: Zum Werk Alexander Kluges*, Munich, Fink, 1987, p. 110.

10. Alexander Kluge, “Die schärfste Ideologie: dass die Realität sich auf ihren realistischen Charakter beruht,” in *Gelegenheitsarbeit einer Sklavin: Zur realistischen Methode*, Frankfurt, Suhrkamp, 1975, p. 222.

11. For an account of this aspect of Kluge’s work, see Rainer Stollmann, “Alexander Kluge als Realist,” in Böhm-Christl, pp. 245–278.

12. Kluge, “Die schärfste Ideologie,” p. 216.

and *Geschichte und Eigensinn*, on the other, is perhaps that the stories, particularly in their powerful reconstruction of the aerial bombardment of his home town in April 1945, focus more on what Kluge describes as the “strategy from above.”¹³ The aerial bombardment which Kluge experienced as a child becomes a spatial and structural metaphor for the terror of reality, the power of oppression, the deadly dialectic of production and destruction which is modern capitalism. On the other hand, the film and the theoretical text focus on the potential for resisting strategies from above by means of strategies from below. In these latter works, particularly in their notions of history, labor power, and *Eigensinn*, a number of romantic motifs and tropes appear which bring Kluge the analytic storyteller into conflict with Kluge the theoretician who remains tempted by the ultimately aesthetic notions of redemption, reconciliation, even a resurrection of the dead — notions which the aesthetic and analytic structures of his literary texts ultimately deny. The extent to which this apparent turn in Kluge’s work has to do with the politics of national identity and German traditions as they have emerged since the early 1980s in the public discourse remains to be analyzed.

In one of his more recent essays, the speech he gave when receiving the Kleist prize in 1985, Kluge had harsh words for those who remain enamored of the repetition compulsions of tragic theater experiences; against the fake romanticism of nineteenth-century opera he posited once again the ideal of analytic writing. One may wonder, however, if the continuing fascination of the theoretician with the utopian promise of aesthetic reconciliation and redemption in and of history is not part of that very same culture that produced opera as the “power-house of emotions.” Certainly the notion of an aesthetic redemption of history, no matter how tempting and intriguing it must be for a writer in the tradition of Benjamin and Adorno, does not mesh well with the methods of analytic writing.

Whether and how Kluge’s romantic projections will manifest themselves in his storytelling remains to be seen. A sequel to *Neue Geschichten* has been announced and is long awaited. That Kluge has not, however, abandoned his analytic bent is clearly indicated in the Kleist speech of 1985. Poe, Musil, Kleist are acknowledged as precursors in the project of analytic writing. In this speech, Kluge is not overly optimistic about the possibilities for opposition and resistance, let alone redemption, through literature. He returns to a pessimistic Adornean trope in which he describes his literary project as a kind of writing in bottles. He ends his Kleist speech by saying:

In the age of the new media, I do not fear what they can do; I rather fear their inability, the destructive power of which fills our heads. In

13. For an excellent analysis of the pivotal place of this story in Kluge’s oeuvre, see David Roberts, “Kluge und die deutsche Zeitgeschichte: *Der Luftangriff auf Halberstadt am 8.4.1945*,” in Böhm-Christl, pp. 77–116.

this age we writers of texts are the guardians of the last residues of grammar, the grammar of time, i.e., the difference between present, future, and past, guardians of difference.¹⁴

But even the *Flaschenpost*, the message in the bottle written by the guardian of difference, assumes it will find its reader, and Kluge's struggle with and against the media continues, if not in his storytelling, then certainly in his most recent intense engagement with private television. But that is another episode of the Kluge story.

14. Kluge, "Die Differenz," in Kluge, *Theodor Fontane, Heinrich von Kleist, Anna Wilde*, Berlin, Wagenbach, 1987, p. 89.